



"Making The Most Of Every Opportunity" (Esther 2)

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I. THE TEXT

vv.2-4 This was not the normal way for a king to secure a queen in the ancient world. Normally they would have to be of royal blood. But this was working in accordance with God's plan

* What pagan king would not like this kind of advice? And especially a Persian king?

* Islam (National religion of Iran/ancient Persia) believes that paradise (heaven) for the martyr includes 73 (some say 70, others 72) virgins who are "splendid, well matched (same age), lovely eyed, of modest gaze, and voluptuous."

vv.5-7 Kish was the father of king Saul. Saul was very handsome, and a head taller than any other men in his day. So it's no surprise that one of his relatives was Esther, this stunningly beautiful woman.

* Hadassah is her Hebrew name, which means "a myrtle" (The myrtle has star like flowers). Esther is her Persian name, which means "a star." Esther is taken from the name of the pagan goddess Ishtar. Interestingly, Mordecai is believed to be connect with the pagan god Marduk. This should not surprise us. Mordecai and Esther have been in captivity for quite a long time. Just as Daniel and his friends Hannaniah, Azariah, & Mischael gained new names in captivity, so did Mordecai and Esther.

* Note: Though their names were more associated with their pagan surroundings, their hearts were committed to the God of Israel.

* Both Esther and Mordecai have had tough times in life, she losing her father and mother, and both living in captivity under Persian rule. But despite the tough times they face, they maintain faith in their god, and godly character.

vv.8-9 There is something about Esther that captivates all who come in contact with her. One thing is of course her stunning natural beauty. But it is more than that. It is her character.

* Esther's beauty goes beyond skin deep.

* Prov.31: 30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

* Prov.11: 22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

v.10 Esther probably would not have been treated with such favor had it become known that she was Jewish.

* Note: Racism is blind to beauty/character

v.12 Gen.37: 25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

* Twelve months of treatments with very expensive items shows the extravagance involved here.

* Fumigation, hair plucking, lightening of the skin color, & perfuming were some of the treatments received

* Twelve months = Extreme Makeover!

v.15 Esther's humility and godly character can certainly be seen here.

v.16b He deposed queen Vashti in the third year of his reign (1:3). These events take place four years later.

v.17 Exalted beyond imagination!

v.20 Despite her exaltation, Esther remains humble/submissive. Her character did not change even though her circumstances in life had

vv.21-23 Mordecai's character shines brightly here as well. He could have joined the conspiracy against the king, but he did not.

* Luke 6: 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

* This seemingly insignificant act by Mordecai is actually one of the most critical events of the story. Sometimes seemingly insignificant acts can turn the entire course of a person's life, and even the ultimate course of history.

* Note: The king is I'm certain happy that the assassination plot had been foiled, but he does nothing to reward Mordecai. This was all in keeping with the divine plan being worked out from heaven

II. LESSONS

A. Inward Character Is More Important Than Outward Beauty

* I Samuel 16: 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

* Esther's greater beauty was inward, not outward

* I Peter 3: 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands

* Esther's submissive character is seen in her relation to Mordecai, as well as her submission to Hegai.

* Esther's character was influenced by her adoptive father

B. Don't Let Earthly Exaltation Ruin Godly Character

* It is Esther's inward character that keeps her from going the way of the world. Just imagine yourself in Esther's sandals?

* Note: Esther did not go "the way of the world" in order to win the king's approval. And she did not let her physical beauty go to her head

* King Saul, Uzziah, etc. let earthly exaltation ruin their godly character. Esther's character is like that of Daniel and friends, like Joseph, like King David, etc.

C. God Gifts Us According To The Work He Has For Us

* Psalm 119: 73 Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.

* Isaiah 49: 5 And now the LORD says-- he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength-- 6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

* Psalm 139: 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

* Esther was exalted beyond her wildest dreams. But it was not for her own sake. This was a part of God's divine plan. God had made Esther for this very purpose. Her

matchless natural beauty was given to her by God. The circumstances of her life were ordained by God see Esther 4 :14.

* John 3: 26 They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

27 To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.

* I Cor.4: 6 Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.

7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

* Note: Esther is the one everyone sees, the one everyone knows, the one everyone is impressed with. Mordecai is the one behind the scenes, remaining faithful, watching out for and giving instruction to Esther, doing good deeds (deeds that he is not immediately rewarded for, but will be one day)

D. God Will Reward Our Good Deeds In His Time

* Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; 10:42; Prov.25:21-22; Eph.6:7-8

* What if Mordecai saw the plot to assassinate the king as an opportunity to "free" Esther from marriage to a pagan king (see Esther 1:4ff); What if he saw it as an opportunity to free the Jewish people from the rule of a man like Xerxes? In chapter three, Xerxes will issue an order for all the Jews to be killed

* Right after this good deed of Mordecai toward the king, all hell breaks loose against him and the Jewish people

E. Rom.8:28 Is True

* Rom.11: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

* Most of the time we can't really see how God is going to work things out, we just have to continue to live by faith and do good. Right after the events of this chapter, things get really ugly for Esther and Mordecai.

* I Peter 4: 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

F. Two Ways God Works Things Out

1. Miraculous intervention

a. II Kings 6:24-7:20

- God did the miraculous, but he worked in conjunction with people making their own decisions. These lepers were the heroes in this story!

b. John 6:6; Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-8

- Note: The disciples had to be submissive/obedient in order to have a part in what Jesus was going to do the food did not multiply all at once.

2. Divine providence

a. Luke 19:28-35; John 12:12-16

b. This is amazing when you think about it. God is sovereign, and He works all things out in conformity with His will, yet He does not violate man's free choice. God knew that Xerxes would get drunk and depose Queen Vashti, etc. etc. He knew that Esther would lose her mom and dad, that Mordecai would adopt her, that after warning Xerxes through Esther, an act of kindness that saved Xerxes life, that Mordecai would not be rewarded for his good deed (but it was recorded) and God is recording every good deed that we perform, and he has promised to reward us, even for a cup of cold water given in His name!

c. My leaving college to join a youth outreach ministry, then going back to college, only to graduate and feel like I had missed the will of God. Being invited to come and join the staff of a little church called Calvary Chapel handed the keys to the church!

CONCLUSION

* God made each and every one of us with a particular purpose in mind. The challenge is to accept how He's made us, and to not miss out on the opportunities He has for us, opportunities to make a difference according to His will (refer again to Esther 4:14).

* I Cor.4: 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

* Eph.5: 15 Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise,
16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

* How do I make sure that I don't miss out of the opportunities God has for me?

1. Make sure you remain submissive/obedient.

2. When opportunities present themselves to do a good deed, take advantage of the opportunity